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ABSTRACT

Faculty development programs encompass a wide range of activities and allow community college faculty to improve instructional material and delivery and keep the spark of creativity and enthusiasm alive under pressures from decreasing budgets and heavier workloads. A recent program at Borough of Manhattan Community College focused on student needs by combining faculty development, curricular reform, and counseling changes to reduce high attrition rates in minority populations. A long-term professional development collaboration between Cuyahoga Community College and Kent State University (KSU) has resulted in 70 staff members taking KSU courses, with 25 admitted to doctoral programs. Adjunct faculty at College of the Canyons (California) receive a stipend and a 10% salary increase for their completion of instructional skills and advanced teaching workshops. Many programs also incorporate classroom research allowing teachers to improve teaching through the use of feedback measures that assess what students are learning and make changes accordingly. Other development efforts include a teaching resource handbook developed by the Community College of Vermont, the infusion of "globally-oriented components" into courses in the Virginia Community College System, and Brevard Community College's Return to Industry program which allows faculty to update skills through summer projects at industry sites of their choice. (KP)

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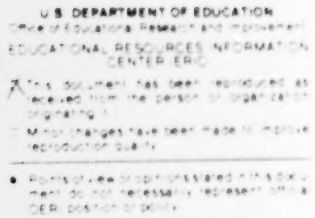
Recent Strategies for Faculty Development



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RECENT STRATEGIES FOR FACULTY DEVELOPMENT

by Kathleen Alfano

Faculty Development: Past and Present

Formal or informal faculty development efforts have taken place in many community colleges since their inception. Early efforts focused less on development and more on periodic inservice training similar to those used in the K-12 systems. In the 1970's and 80's, faculty and staff development programs came to be viewed as an economically viable option to improve student outcomes and maintain institutional integrity. The 1990's require channeling the pressures of budget constraints, mission confusion, student diversity, and changing faculty needs into growth opportunities in four areas: leadership, database management, diversified instruction and student services, and formalized faculty development (Coll, 1991). As the following examples show, faculty development today can encompass strategies ranging from simple one-purpose publications to multi-year consortia projects.

Focusing on Student Needs

Changing needs of student populations often drive community college faculty development programs. A freshman retention project at Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC) combined faculty development training with curricular reform and counseling changes to reduce high attrition rates in a predominantly minority student population. The BMCC plan included more bilingual hiring, increased community outreach, special programs and workshops on cross-cultural understanding and intergroup dynamics for faculty and staff, a mentoring program for black students, and a special seminar to assist women and minority faculty to complete their doctoral dissertations. Outcomes included increases in student retention, multi-cultural awareness, minority hires, and faculty completion of doctoral degrees (Kappner, 1991).

Linkages with Universities

Some community colleges have improved linkages with nearby universities for both the benefit of student transfer and faculty and staff development. A long-term professional development collaboration between Cuyahoga Community College and Kent State University has resulted in 70 staff members taking KSU courses, with 25 admitted to doctoral programs (Anglin, 1992).

Specific Faculty Needs

Most development programs reach full-time faculty, but they can overlook the special needs of part-time and evening faculty. At the College of the Canyons (CA), the majority of faculty are part-time or adjunct instructors with little or no training in teaching. The college has instituted an Associate Program for Adjunct Instructors consisting of four steps: (1) obtaining a department chair's recommendation after completing a minimum of one semester of college service, (2) completing the Instructional Skills Workshop training series, (3) completing an 8- to 10-hour Advanced Teaching Workshop which examines questioning techniques, writing across the curriculum, and critical thinking, and (4) undergoing a classroom evaluation by colleagues and/or students. Completers are advanced in rank to Adjunct Associate Instructor, with a 10% salary increase and a program stipend (Gerda, 1991).

In Fall 1991, thirteen Fullerton College faculty began a program to enhance teaching excellence in evening classes. These faculty attended workshops on adult learners, learning styles, classroom assessment techniques, and interactive teaching techniques. The following Spring, they applied these techniques to their evening classes. Students were surveyed at the beginning, middle, and end of the semester to assess program effectiveness while the faculty continued crucial monthly meetings to share ideas (Kelly, 1992).

Focusing on the Improvement of Teaching

Development programs for the improvement of teaching range from year-long focused programs of skill training, classroom observation, and assessment to one-day workshops profiling student learning and model teaching strategies. American River College's Human Resource Development Plan for 1991-92 (McCuen, 1991) is a mix of programs including workshops on classroom research, working with small groups, student involvement, and computer uses; a 3-day Great Teacher's retreat; and mini-grants to visit other institutions.

Assessment of Teaching and Learning for Faculty Development

Cross and Angelo (1988) have generated a great deal of national interest in the subject of "teaching to improve learning" through classroom research. Their main premise is that teaching will be improved if teachers design "feedback measures" to assess what students are learning and then change their delivery and material in order to maximize its impact on student learning. This approach has been utilized and adapted by 2- and 4-year colleges internationally.

The Activating Learning in the Classroom Project at Middlesex Community College is a year-long instructional and professional development program. Eight professors representing each college division volunteer to reconfigure one of their courses to promote active learning. The program begins at the end of the spring semester with five full days of seminars during which the professors assess their own teaching style, their students' thinking, and the materials used in their class. Weekly seminars are continued in the fall and each professor produces a course guide containing a course description, goals and objectives, a detailed syllabus and a large section of reading and focus questions (Jones and Duffy, 1991).

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Some community colleges tie faculty development to the evaluation process. Oklahoma Junior College has developed a novel approach as part of a peer evaluation process. Peer coaching, which guarantees a non-threatening environment, is linked to a complementary staff development program. The hallmark of this Minor-Preston peer coaching model is to allow instructors to receive direct instruction from their expert colleagues and to keep important long-term faculty experience from being lost to the college (Minor and Preston, 1991).

Faculty Resource Guides that Promote Development

The Community College of Vermont has produced a resource handbook for instructors which includes successful approaches to teaching adults; an overview of adult learning theory; an outline of the Kolb approach to understanding student learning styles; guidance on course planning, developing learning objectives, selecting textbooks, planning teaching and learning methods, and appropriate classroom assessment; strategies for enlivening classroom presentations and discussions; methods for dealing with special student problems; and campus resources (Community College of Vermont, 1992). Massachusetts Bay Community College has produced an ongoing publication called *Educational Forum*, designed to promote discussion of teaching, learning, and professional development. (Fideler, 1992).

Development Programs Focusing on Specific Curricula

Some faculty development programs focus on curriculum development. Project International Emphasis has involved all 24 colleges of the Virginia Community College System to infuse "globally-oriented components" across the academic and career counseling curricula. During the project's first year over 200 courses were revised and 21 course modules were developed with titles such as African Literature, Cross Cultural Communication, and International Marketing (Blois and Williams, 1991). Another example is The American Association of Community Colleges' national faculty development Project to Advance the Humanities, which has included a national humanities conference, college-based curriculum, faculty development, and funding for humanities action plans and regional college networks (Shapiro, 1991).

Scholarship and Professionalism as Aids to Development

Encouraging community college faculty to go beyond rudimentary teaching skills and to develop further as professionals and scholars in their fields also aids in faculty development. Major issues include increasing faculty ties to their disciplines, professionalizing the college culture, and changing attitudes and reward systems (Vaughan, 1991). Brevard Community College has promoted a particular program of faculty professional development for the past nine years with its Return to Industry (RTI) program. Faculty from any discipline who are interested in updating their skills and knowledge of new technology can propose 4- to 6- week summer projects at industry sites of their choosing. Participating faculty receive a modest stipend and can receive credit towards the graduate coursework hours required in the union contract (Layne, 1991).

Summary

Today, faculty development projects are sometimes the only avenue to relieve pressures caused by increases in student enrollment, diversity concerns, student underpreparedness, and the combination of decreasing budgets and heavier workloads. Development programs allow the community college faculty to establish links with professional colleagues, to modify and improve instructional material and delivery, and to keep the spark of creativity and enthusiasm alive for themselves and their students.

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